

## PART V

## CROPS

Major Crops

Because of the importance of livestock farming Pierce County is an area in which the major part of the cropland is devoted to raising feed crops. About 73 percent of the cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and silage. Most of this feed is used directly on the farms and in the immediate locality to support dairy and beef cattle. The 25,378 acres of harvested cropland enumerated in 1954 were planted to the following specified crops listed in order of acreage importance: clover and timothy hay, oat hay, grass silage, wild hay, berries, vegetables, bulbs, and flowers.

Total Acres of Land Harvested, 1954  
25,378 acres

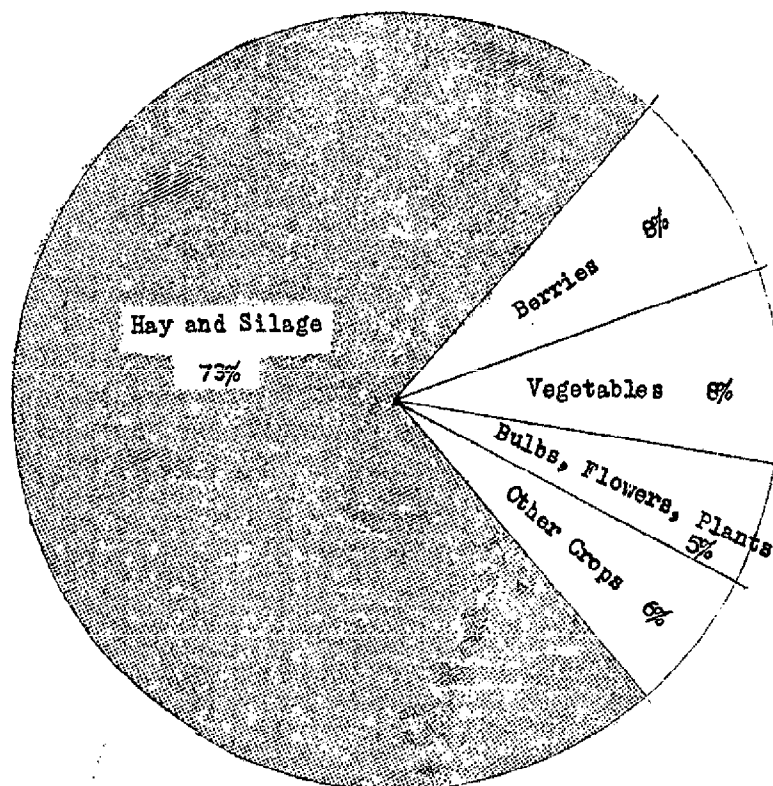


Figure 10.- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops  
Pierce County, 1954.  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

Crop Trends

The crop history of any farming region reflects to a large degree the economic changes occurring within it. A number of changes are apparent in the emphasis and acreages Pierce County farmers have given to leading crops. These show the influence of new market outlets and improved rail and truck transportation. They also show the influence of the mechanization of agriculture

and its consequent decrease in horses which formerly consumed large amounts of grain and hay. Changes in the crop patterns also result from farmers' experimentations with various crops and types of farming for specific markets.

Since 1939 there have been several general trends in the crop program of Pierce County farmers. The acreage in hay crops has increased from about 15,800 acres to 18,500 acres since 1939 to support a larger cattle population. The growing of clover, timothy and alfalfa has increased and grass silage cutting is larger. The acreage in commercial vegetables or truck crops has been lowered from 2,975 acres in 1939 to 2,000 acres in 1954. Berry growing has changed in total and variety preference. Acreage in berries increased from 1,825 acres in 1939 to 2,025 in 1954. All land in crops has decreased since 1939, according to Census data. In 1939 there were 33,780 acres harvested for crops compared to 25,378 in 1954. This indicates a trend in which harvested cropland has been diverted into permanent pastures, residential properties and other uses which do not produce a harvested crop.

### Hay and Silage Crops

For many years the most important crop in Pierce County from the acreage standpoint has been hay. All types of hay and silage have ranged between 15,000 and 19,000 acres. Clover and timothy are the most common hay types, generally grown in a mixture. Clover and timothy reached a peak of 7,000 acres in 1940, a low of 3,950 in 1944, then increased to 6,800 in 1954. Oat hay is second in acreage among the hays averaging 3,000 acres per year. Grass silage and wild hay covered about 3,000 acres each in 1954. The hay crops are mainly grown on the drier upland soils. Wild hay acreage on the poorer-class III, IV, and V

Table 16.- Oats and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production  
Pierce County, 1939-1955

Year	Oats (grain)			Barley (grain)		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	1,330	40	53,200	20	18.0	360
1940	1,210	35	42,350	20	19.0	380
1941	1,150	44	50,600	20	17.0	340
1942	1,140	44	50,160	30	19.0	570
1943	1,060	48	50,880	30	20.0	600
1944	1,050	42	44,100	20	15.0	300
1945	820	36	29,520	20	18.0	360
1946	750	42	31,500	20	21.0	420
1947	900	45	40,500	30	18.0	540
1948	1,000	37	37,000	50	19.0	950
1949	1,030	45	46,350	70	18.0	1,260
1950	1,100	43	47,300	70	23.0	1,610
1951	1,200	43	51,600	70	22.0	1,540
1952	970	50	48,500	60	23.0	1,380
1953	770	50	38,500	60	20.0	1,200
1954	780	42	32,760	60	20.0	1,200
1955	680	68	46,240	70	25.0	1,750

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Estimates Division,  
State of Washington, 1939-1955.

lands has increased from 2,450 acres in 1939 to 2,950 acres in 1954. Clover acreage has tended to remain stable. Farmers use it in crop rotations to restore nitrogen in the soil. While no statistics are available for silage grass in previous Census years, 600 acres were reported in 1950 and a much higher acreage of 2,960 in 1954. This indicates a growing trend to store silage for winter feed in place of hay. Alfalfa acreage has also shown a steady increase, going from a low of 270 acres in 1939 to 600 acres in 1953 and 1955.

Table 17.- Clover-Timothy Hay and Alfalfa Hay  
Acreage, Yield and Production  
Pierce County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	6,300	2.0	12,600	270	2.0	540
1940	7,000	2.5	17,500	300	2.3	700
1941	6,600	2.1	13,860	310	3.0	930
1942	5,300	2.6	13,780	300	3.8	1,140
1943	4,300	2.0	8,600	330	3.0	990
1944	3,950	1.9	7,505	340	2.7	900
1945	4,110	1.8	7,400	330	2.0	660
1946	4,000	2.0	8,000	340	2.5	850
1947	4,700	1.9	8,930	330	2.0	660
1948	5,100	2.1	10,710	360	2.5	900
1949	6,100	1.6	9,800	350	1.6	560
1950	5,600	2.2	12,320	380	1.6	610
1951	6,000	1.8	10,800	480	1.5	720
1952	5,800	1.7	9,860	510	2.0	1,020
1953	6,100	3.0	18,300	600	2.2	1,320
1954	6,800	1.8	12,240	580	2.5	1,450
1955	6,600	1.6	10,560	600	3.0	1,800

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Estimates  
Division, State of Washington, 1939-1955.

### Vegetables

Pierce County, particularly the Puyallup Valley with its good soil and close location to Seattle and Tacoma markets, is an important truck crop area. In 1954 there were about 2,200 acres growing a wide variety of vegetables for fresh and processor markets. The county ranked eleventh in the state in vegetable farming. Acreages in various commercial vegetables change from year to year. In 1955 they ranked as follows in acreage: rhubarb (600), snap beans (350), lettuce (335), cauliflower (175), carrots (125), sweet corn (100), cucumbers (100), broccoli (100), green peas (85), cabbage (85), and celery (60). The Puyallup Valley leads the state in rhubarb growing, some of which is grown in heated sheds for winter market. The area is also second in lettuce, celery and snap beans. In 1954 the sale of truck crops returned a total of \$1,020,000 to 184 vegetable growers in Pierce County.

Table 18.- Vegetable Crops: Sweet Corn, Cauliflower,  
Cucumbers and Lettuce  
Pierce County, 1940-1955

Year	Sweet Corn 1/		Cauliflower		Cucumbers 2/		Lettuce	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	---	---	120	925	---	---	275	2,150
1941	---	---	125	1,175	---	400	250	1,750
1942	---	---	100	760	---	450	225	1,575
1943	---	---	85	825	---	400	180	1,200
1944	---	---	90	665	---	550	150	1,370
1945	---	---	90	715	---	600	170	1,300
1946	---	---	100	775	---	580	190	1,600
1947	---	---	140	1,150	---	600	235	1,850
1948	---	---	140	1,050	200	725	270	2,300
1949	125	380	125	1,150	180	740	275	2,475
1950	125	525	175	1,800	100	850	235	2,400
1951	150	700	160	1,300	100	500	270	3,100
1952	100	500	175	1,825	120	525	300	3,800
1953	125	700	190	2,250	250	900	310	3,300
1954	125	650	135	1,250	125	500	325	3,700
1955	100	400	175	2,000	100	480	335	4,025

1/ Not available prior to 1948.

2/ Production only 1941-1947.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates  
Division, State of Washington.

Table 19.- Vegetable Crops: Green Peas, Broccoli,  
Cabbage and Carrots  
Pierce County, 1940-1955

Year	Green Peas (Fresh)		Broccoli		Cabbage		Carrots	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	365	1,140	10	30	160	1,160	85	745
1941	365	1,395	10	35	180	1,990	100	1,000
1942	260	800	15	45	210	1,300	85	850
1943	250	1,000	10	40	180	1,075	100	1,100
1944	160	575	10	35	110	675	110	1,150
1945	100	290	20	50	125	770	175	1,900
1946	60	200	50	150	150	1,025	125	1,150
1947	70	280	50	150	160	1,100	130	1,150
1948	90	275	75	225	190	1,350	100	975
1949	100	400	75	230	180	1,225	75	800
1950	120	450	80	240	210	1,525	150	2,000
1951	150	350	70	210	215	1,400	150	1,725
1952	125	500	60	119	260	1,800	150	1,750
1953	125	450	60	118	145	1,100	150	1,450
1954	80	360	150	316	115	950	115	1,050
1955	85	370	100	300	85	650	125	1,250

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates  
Division, State of Washington

Table 20.- Vegetable Crops: Celery, Rhubarb and Spinach  
Pierce County, 1940-1955

Year	Celery		Rhubarb (Field) 1/		Spinach	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	150	2,600	--	700	140	535
1941	125	2,350	--	600	140	635
1942	100	1,780	--	650	140	680
1943	75	1,375	130	900	170	775
1944	65	1,190	150	705	130	550
1945	80	1,620	175	1,190	135	650
1946	100	1,700	180	1,250	160	705
1947	100	1,600	180	1,200	150	750
1948	135	2,260	210	1,500	175	760
1949	125	2,100	250	1,700	140	750
1950	130	2,300	350	2,625	215	1,200
1951	85	1,400	400	3,000	205	1,100
1952	95	1,550	450	3,200	200	1,100
1953	75	1,200	500	3,000	170	970
1954	80	1,450	520	3,500	105	550
1955	60	1,200	600	1,800	70	400

1/ Production only 1940-1942.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates  
Division, State of Washington.

### Berries

Pierce County is one of the pioneer and leading berry growing areas of the state. The total acreage of all types of cane, bush and strawberries amounted to about 2,025 acres in 1954. Freeze damage in 1950 and 1955 has resulted in some variations in acreage and types. Interest in berry growing has varied in recent years because of market conditions. Mainly grown in the Puyallup Valley and on the surrounding hill land, the major types are the cane-berries--raspberries and blackberries. In 1955 raspberry acreage was estimated at 1,300 acres, largest in the state. Raspberries have shown a decreasing tendency since the peak year of 1,800 acres in 1949. Interest in blackberries has declined also from a peak of 1,150 acres in 1942 to 600 and 700 acres in the 1953-55 period. Pierce County is the leading Washington County in cultivated blackberries. Acreages of less important types--Loganberries, Boysenberries and Youngberries--have declined greatly since 1939, from 39 acres to only 14 acres. The growing of strawberries has fluctuated from a low of 100 acres in 1944 to a peak of 500 in 1952. Blueberries, a relatively recent introduction, have increased from 16 acres in 1940 to 100 acres in 1955. Other bushberries, currants and gooseberries, are minor compared to plantings in the 1920's and 1930's. Some factors which have caused the decrease of berry acreages are market competition with other lower-priced fruits, labor costs for picking, periodic freeze damage to plant stock, and the continued growth of urban and suburban dwellings in the areas of production.

Table 21.- Berry Crops: Strawberries, Blueberries, Raspberries and Blackberries  
Pierce County, 1940-1955

Year	Strawberries		Blueberries		Raspberries (Red)		Blackberries (Tame)	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1940	350	590	16	12	1,700	3,000	1,200	4,700
1941	400	700	35	45	1,600	2,550	1,150	4,350
1942	325	450	35	40	1,500	3,700	1,150	4,500
1943	175	250	35	60	1,400	3,200	1,100	3,800
1944	100	90	37	60	1,550	3,400	1,000	4,100
1945	125	150	40	75	1,550	3,700	1,000	4,000
1946	125	150	40	65	1,650	5,000	900	3,800
1947	150	225	60	100	1,700	5,400	800	3,400
1948	175	325	63	140	1,750	5,800	700	2,900
1949	175	275	65	125	1,800	5,400	750	2,975
1950	250	425	65	100	1,700	4,100	480	810 1/
1951	350	450	75	80	1,350	3,500	710	3,300
1952	500	1,100	75	150	1,200	4,200	600	2,700
1953	400	1,000	80	90	1,250	4,700	600	3,100
1954	250	700	100	200	1,250	3,500	700	1,900
1955	280	600	100	150	1,300	4,000	700	2,300

1/ Frost damage.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates Division, State of Washington.

#### Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs, and Plants

Pierce County is second in the state in the growing and selling of flowers, bulbs, seeds, ornamentals, vegetable plants, mushrooms and other specialties grown in nurseries, greenhouses and under intensive cultivation in open fields. In 1954 about 1,190 acres of land and 506,000 square feet of greenhouse space were devoted to these and allied products. Production of these horticultural specialties was located on 120 farms, mainly in the Puyallup Valley. Of high value, these products sold from farms brought a total cash return to the farmer of \$1,726,256 according to the Census of Agriculture in the year 1954. The industry accounted for over one-third of the total value of all crops from Pierce County farms in 1954.

Flowers and flowering plants lead in acreage and sale value. The Puyallup Valley is known widely as a specialized daffodil and tulip growing area. The annual Daffodil Festival of the valley honors the flower industry. Commercial cut flowers are harvested in the spring and later in the season the bulbs are harvested for a regional and national market. According to the 1954 Census, about 505 acres divided among 41 farms were growing flowers. Flower culture under glass was being practiced by 52 farms.

Vegetables under glass, vegetable plants, berry plants, bulbs, mushrooms and other non-ornamental plants are second in value. The sale of all types of plants for replanting, i.e. tomatoes, onions, cabbage, was high in value. One important specialty is rhubarb grown under heated sheds for a winter market.

Sales were \$434,382 in 1954 divided among 15 to 20 growers. The nursery industry which grows shrubs, trees and ornamentals for landscaping included 61 farms using a total of 225 acres in 1954. Altogether, these nurseries sold \$403,000 worth of products in 1954.

Statistics on acreage, greenhouse space and sales since 1939 indicate that nursery, greenhouse and intensive flower and plant specialties are on an uptrend in Pierce County. Nursery acreage has increased nearly three times. The open-field area has nearly doubled. Greenhouse space is less than in 1939 but has increased since 1949. Total sales in dollars are eight times larger than in 1939. Expansion has been favored by growing population in the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan areas, increased post-war residential building and the accumulation of growing and marketing experience in the floral, plant and nursery specialties.

Table 22.- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms, and other Special Plants.  
Pierce County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; Vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields & under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in Open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	87	\$ 45,000	675	604,000 sq. ft.	\$ 171,000
1944 <sup>1/</sup>	--	--	--	--	--
1949	158	\$145,000	1,033	414,000 sq. ft.	\$ 579,000
1954	225	\$403,000	1,193	506,000 sq. ft.	\$1,323,500

<sup>1/</sup> No Census data are available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold  
in 1954 - \$3,464,648

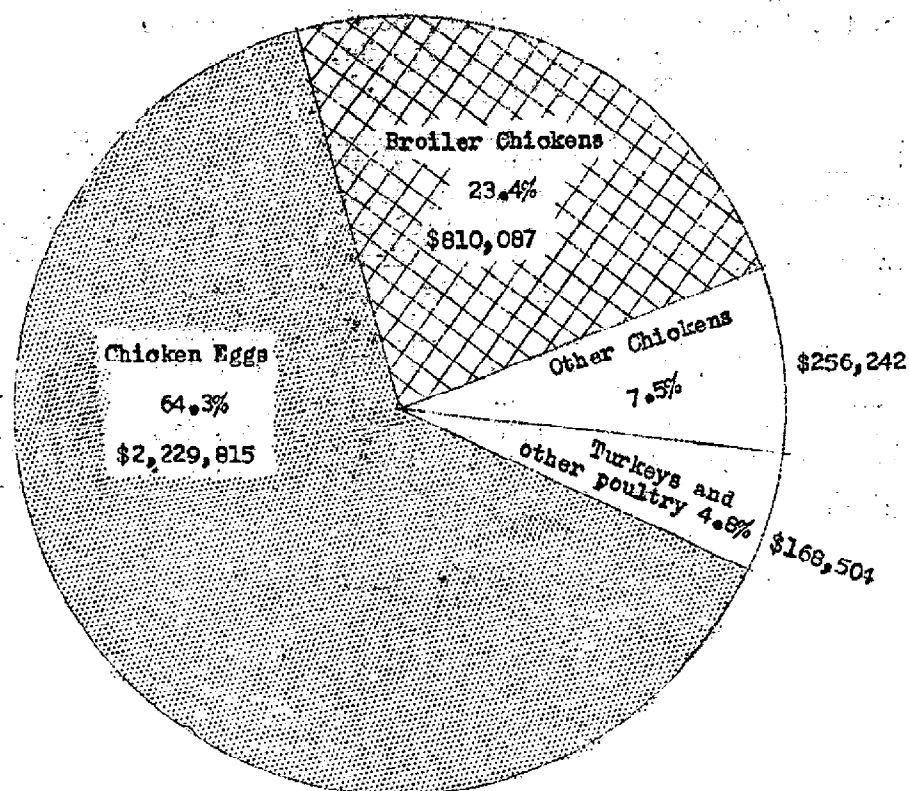


Figure 12.- Divisions of Pierce County Poultry Industry  
By Products Sold in 1954.  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)